

## Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

### ☐ WHAT IS IT?

- ✓ Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes coughing with little or no fever. Coughing may result in vomiting or gagging. Some infected persons make a “whoop” sound when the person breathes in after coughing.

### ☐ COMPLICATIONS

- ✓ Pertussis is most dangerous to infants less than 1 year old who may develop pneumonia, convulsions, and rarely, brain damage or death.
- ✓ Serious complications are less likely in older children and adults.

### ☐ SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Symptoms appear between 6 to 21 days (average 7-10) after exposure to an infected person.
- ✓ Pertussis usually starts with cold symptoms (runny nose, cough) followed by episodes of severe coughing that can last 1-2 months.
- ✓ Vomiting may occur after coughing spells.
- ✓ The person may look and feel healthy between coughing episodes.
- ✓ Immunized school children, adolescents and adults have milder symptoms than young children.

### ☐ HOW IS IT SPREAD?

- ✓ Pertussis is spread to close contacts through droplets from the mouth and nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- ✓ Persons treated with antibiotics are contagious until the first 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment have been completed.

### ☐ WHO GETS IT?

- ✓ Unimmunized or inadequately immunized people are at higher risk for severe disease.
- ✓ Many cases occur in adults and older children because protection from the vaccine lasts only 5 to 10 years after the last dose.
- ✓ Pertussis vaccine is used to protect young infants from severe disease and death, but even vaccinated persons can get less severe pertussis infections

### ☐ TREATMENT

- ✓ Antibiotics active against the pertussis bacteria are used to treat and prevent spread of pertussis to others.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration (loss of fluids).

### ☐ PREVENTION

- ✓ Pertussis vaccine is included in DTaP vaccines.
  - Before age 7, children should get 5 doses of the DTaP vaccine.
  - These are usually given at 2, 4, 6, and 15-18 months\* of age and 4 - 6 years of age.
  - The 4<sup>th</sup> dose may be given as early as 12 months of age.
  - **NEED TO INSERT INFO ABOUT BOOSTER DOSES WHEN AVAILABLE, LATE JUNE**
- ✓ Persons with pertussis should stay home and avoid close contact with others until 5 days of antibiotic treatment for pertussis have been completed at which time they are no longer contagious.
- ✓ If you live or have close contact with someone who has pertussis you might need to take antibiotics to prevent pertussis - contact your health care provider.
- ✓ Persons with any cough illness should avoid contact with infants and expectant mothers, including visiting or working in labor, delivery, and nursery areas of hospitals and in child care settings.
- ✓ Avoid sharing with infants any food, toys, or other object that may be contaminated with secretions from the mouth or nose of another person.

**Report all cases to the Health Department by calling (206) 296 - 4774.**